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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promoting and facilitating the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, and reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests: promoting and facilitating implementation (programme element I.a)

Promoting and facilitating implementation

Note by the Secretariat

Programme element I.a was not discussed by the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests at its third session and is not covered in the report of the Forum on that session (E/CN.17/IFF/1999/25). Accordingly, section I.A of the report of the Forum on its second session (E/CN.17/IFF/1998/14) is reproduced in the annex in order to facilitate discussion of this programme element at the fourth session of the Forum.

* E/CN.17/IFF/2000/1.

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Annex

Extract from section I of the report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on its second session*

A. Promoting and facilitating implementation (programme element I.a)

Preliminary conclusions

1. The Forum welcomed the commitment, expressed by Governments, international organizations and other partners, to the implementation of all the Forum's proposals for action and noted with appreciation the many activities at the national level initiated by countries, groups of countries and international organizations. It noted the added attention given to the social and environmental services provided by forests as well as the challenges to address these issues. It emphasized the need for the effective involvement of relevant interested parties, as well as the improvement of institutional arrangements and appropriate ways and means of communication.

2. The Forum underscored the need for implementation of strategies in terms of investment, mobilization of domestic and international resources and — in the case of developing countries, with special attention to least developed countries and developing countries with low forest cover — appropriate financial mechanisms and/or measures including support through official development assistance (ODA).

3. The Forum considered national forest programmes, as defined by IPF, to be a viable framework for addressing forest sector issues, including implementation of IPF's proposals for action in a holistic, comprehensive and multisectoral manner. It took note of the national case studies prepared under the Six-country Initiative of Finland, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia, Uganda and the United Kingdom, as well as of the Baden-Baden workshop and its results. This initiative was considered an important contribution to the assessment of IPF's proposals for action at the national level, and for supporting implementation work at national and subnational levels. The Initiative had recognized the diversity of national conditions and interested parties in assessing the relevance and prioritization of the proposals at the national level, and had also produced a useful Practitioners Guide, which should be revised to facilitate assessment exercises. In order to enhance the implementation of the proposals for action adopted by IPF, the Forum identified the need for effective follow-up and long-term commitment at all levels.

4. The Forum noted that the IPF's proposals for action were numerous and complex and covered a wide range of important issues. The Forum recognized that sustainable forest management was a long-term process and goal and countries would not, within a limited time-frame, be able to show substantial progress in capacity-building, policy development, planning processes and creation of enabling and supporting infrastructure. The Forum underlined the need for sustained efforts in implementing IPF's proposals.

5. The Forum recognized that IPF implementation by developing countries with low forest cover merited special attention. It called on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as the lead agency for this programme element, to expedite the development of a definition of low forest cover as contained in IPF's proposals for action. It invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as well as the relevant environmental conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity,[1] the United Nations

* E/CN.17/IFF/1998/14.

Framework Convention on Climate Change[2] and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa,[3] and international financing institutions to look into and reflect on the special needs of developing countries with low forest cover, and called upon the informal, high-level Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests to coordinate its work in supporting these countries.

6. The Forum expressed support for the work carried out by the informal, high-level Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests. It noted that the Task Force had been and continued to be an effective means of support of the IPF/Forum process and of informal inter-agency coordination on forests. In future, the work of the Task Force should be strengthened and further developed.

7. The Forum took note of the continuing monitoring of the effects of airborne pollutants on forests within member countries of the International Cooperative Programme on Forests (ICP Forests), as well as the establishment of new protocols dealing with nitrogen, heavy metals and persistent pollutants under the Geneva Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution,[4] as well as the beginning of regional cooperation on a monitoring network on acid rain among countries in Eastern Asia. It noted with appreciation the offer by some countries to extend their cooperation to interested countries not presently participating in international networks.

8. The Forum also took note of recent regional and international initiatives that are supportive of implementation of the IPF proposals for action, including the strengthening of the Sub-Network of Protected Areas of the Amazon, agreed by the Ministers of Environment of the Parties to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, in March 1998; recent developments within the framework of the Central American Convention on Forests; the regional workshops on IPF implementation held in Indonesia in February 1998, in Senegal in April 1998 and in Chile in June 1998, under the auspices of the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions for Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean; the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe held in Portugal in July 1998; and the G-8 Forest Action Program endorsed by G-8 Heads of State in May 1998 in England (the Group of Eight, or G-8, comprises the United States of America, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada and the Russian Federation).

Important elements for the implementation of IPF's proposals for action

9. The Forum agreed that the following are particularly important for the implementation of IPF's proposals for action:

(a) [Provision, taking into consideration the relevant chapters of Agenda 21[5] and paragraph 10 of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles),[6] by the international donor community, international organizations and international financial institutions of new and additional resources, including through innovative mechanisms and/or measures] to mobilize finance, technical assistance and transfer of environmentally sound technology at the international and domestic levels, as well as through better use of existing mechanisms and measures, to support national forest programmes in developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, in particular countries with low forest cover and with fragile forest ecosystems;

(b) Promotion, where appropriate, of an integrated approach by countries through their national forest programmes as defined by IPF, and in collaboration with international organizations, to the implementation of the IPF proposals for action and forest-related work

as set out under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(c) Creation and/or strengthening, by countries and international organizations, of initiatives, approaches and partnerships, which could include partnership agreements, to encourage long-term political commitment; relevant, effective, sustained and reliable donor support; and participation by the private sector and major groups; as well as recognition of the special role of official development assistance (ODA) in meeting the needs of developing countries, in particular least developed countries and countries with low forest cover;

(d) A systematic assessment, by all countries, of IPF's proposals for action and planning for their implementation in the context of countries' own national processes aimed at sustainable forest management;

(e) Implementation by countries of the IPF's proposals for action in the context of their national forest programmes/national policy framework in a coordinated manner and with the participation of all interested parties. Clear objectives and criteria should help promote effective implementation of sustainable forest management. The policy framework should be kept under review in order to continue to embody capabilities for intersectoral planning, coordination and implementation, and adequate resource allocation;

(f) Establishment, by each country, of a focal point to guide and coordinate the implementation and assessment process of the IPF's proposals for action, including the participation of all relevant interested parties;

(g) Further assistance by the international community to developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing the IPF's proposals for action as needed. National forest programmes could be used as a framework for channelling development assistance for implementation. Such support is particularly needed for capacity-building, and for creating participatory mechanisms and innovative financing arrangements.